

**What is claimed is:**

1. An apparatus comprising:
  - reading means for reading first ink characteristic data from an indicia;
  - detecting means for detecting at least one ink characteristic of the indicia to generate second ink characteristic data; and
  - processing means, coupled to the reading means and to the detecting means, for comparing the second ink characteristic data with the first ink characteristic data.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first ink characteristic data is included in the indicia in encrypted form, and the reading means includes means for decrypting the encrypted first ink characteristic data.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one ink characteristic detected by the detecting means includes at least one of: (a) a color of at least a portion of the indicia, (b) a spectral characteristic of the indicia, (c) a visible light absorption characteristic of the indicia, (d) a visible light reflectance characteristic of the indicia, (e) an infra-red absorption characteristic of the indicia, (f) an infra-red luminescence characteristic of the indicia, and (g) a visible luminescence characteristic of the indicia.
4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the detecting means detects respective colors of a plurality of different portions of the indicia.
5. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the detecting means detects at least one of: (a) a spectral characteristic of the indicia, and (b) a luminescence characteristic of the indicia.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reading means and the detecting means comprise a single scanner that is shared by the reading means and the detecting means.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reading means includes means for reading at least one symbol included in the indicia.

8. A method comprising:

reading first ink characteristic data from an indicia;

detecting at least one ink characteristic of the indicia to generate second ink characteristic data; and

comparing the second ink characteristic data with the first ink characteristic data to verify the indicia.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the first ink characteristic data is included in the indicia in encrypted form, and the reading step includes decrypting the encrypted first ink characteristic.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the detecting step includes detecting at least one of: (a) a color of at least a portion of the indicia, (b) a spectral characteristic of the indicia, (c) a visible light absorption characteristic of the indicia, (d) a visible light reflectance characteristic of the indicia, (e) an infra-red absorption characteristic of the indicia, (f) an infra-red luminescence characteristic of the indicia, and (g) a visible luminescence characteristic of the indicia.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the detecting step includes detecting respective colors of a plurality of different portions of the indicia.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein the detecting step includes detecting at least one of: (a) a spectral characteristic of the indicia, and (b) a luminescence characteristic of the indicia.

13. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

scanning the indicia with a scanner;

and wherein:

the reading step includes analyzing an image signal provided by the scanner; and

the detecting step includes analyzing the image signal provided by the scanner.

14. The method of claim 8, wherein the reading step includes reading at least one symbol included in the indicia.

15. An apparatus comprising:

a print element for applying ink to a substrate to form an indicia; and

processing means coupled to the print element for causing the print element to print at least one symbol as part of the indicia, the at least one symbol including ink characteristic data that is indicative of a characteristic of the ink.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of a color of the ink.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the indicia includes a plurality of panels, and the ink characteristic data is indicative of respective colors of the plurality of panels.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein at least two of the panels are of different colors.

19. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of at least one spectral characteristic of the ink.

20. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of at least one luminescence characteristic of the ink.

21. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the processing means causes the print element to print the ink characteristic data in encrypted form.

22. A method comprising:

determining a characteristic of ink to be applied on a substrate; and

applying the ink to the substrate to form an indicia such that the indicia includes at least one symbol, the at least one symbol including ink characteristic data that is indicative of the characteristic of the ink.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of a color of the ink.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the applying step includes forming a plurality of panels of the indicia, and the ink characteristic data is indicative of respective colors of the plurality of panels.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein at least two of the panels are of different colors.
26. The method of claim 22, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of at least one spectral characteristic of the ink.
27. The method of claim 22, wherein the ink characteristic data is indicative of at least one luminescence characteristic of the ink.
28. The method of claim 22, wherein the applying step includes printing the ink characteristic data in encrypted form.